

(Translation)

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1 November 2010

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**Trial Scheme on the preparation of Reference Notes
for Motion Debates at Council meetings**

Thank you for your letter dated 29 October 2010 and the suggestions you made regarding the preparation of reference notes for motion debates at Council meetings. I fully understand your views and concerns about the limited information provided in the reference note for the motion debate on releasing LIU Xiaobo. I wish to take this opportunity to explain to you more clearly the purpose and scope of content of the reference notes which have been set out in our earlier circular on the subject on 15 October 2010.

Following a survey conducted early this year on the workload of Members' Personal Assistants ("PAs"), we consider that there is room for the Legislative Council ("LegCo") Secretariat to undertake some preliminary research work for the benefit of all Members so as to relieve individual PAs from undertaking basic research work which is common to all Members. At the LegCo Commission meeting held on 17 June 2010, members decided that backgrounders should be provided for all motion debates with no legislative effect at Council meetings starting from the 2010-2011 session.

As such backgrounders have to be prepared within a very tight timeframe of less than two weeks, the Secretariat considers it prudent to test the usefulness of such backgrounders, now referred to as “reference notes”, and assess the impact of the new service on existing resources under a trial scheme. We aim to provide in the reference notes (issued in Chinese only) background information, latest development and a gist of the major issues of concerns relating to the subject matters of the motions based on the information available in the LegCo database, and to provide hyperlinks to relevant documents discussed at the Council and its committees. This has been explained in our circular to Members on 15 October 2010 when we issued the reference notes on motion debates for the Council meeting on 20 October 2010.

On account of time constraint, the extent of research would be limited to what is available in the LegCo database and official statements made by the relevant authorities and bodies. For subject matters with limited prior discussion in LegCo such as the motion on releasing LIU Xiaobo, information available in our database is necessarily also limited. We will therefore try to include in the reference note accessible information from official sources as well. If Members require further information, this should be available through the document hyperlinks provided.

It has always been our commitment to ensure impartiality and neutrality in the production of all research publications. Our research staff will always seek to provide relevant information based on reliable sources when preparing the reference notes.

Thank you once again for your suggestions for making the reference notes more useful to Members. Since this service is being experimented on a trial basis, we are continuously evaluating its effectiveness. We plan to conduct a comprehensive review in three months' time to examine various aspects of the service, and the suggestions which you have made will definitely be taken into account. We welcome any further feedback which you may have as this will help us to improve the service further.

Yours sincerely,

(Ms Pauline NG)
Secretary General

c.c. All Members of the Legislative Council